

Montana Department of Military Affairs
Disaster & Emergency Services Division
State Emergency Coordination Center

1900 Williams Street - P.O. Box 4789
Helena, MT 59604-4789
Telephone: (406) 841-3911 Fax: (406) 841-3965

Situation Report for July 31, 2003 (issued @ 14:00 hrs.)

Wildfires of 2003

Attention * - New information shown in today's report displayed in ***Bold Italics*** type.

I. - Background Information:

- Fire activity throughout the state continues to generate concern on the part of many Montana citizens and lots of work for local government officials. High ridge temperatures, drying conditions, and possibly thunderstorms later in the week may create a substantial increase in fire activity. Fire managers believe a shift to these conditions could easily create a long summer siege.

II. - Current Montana Fire Conditions: (as reported to NRCC ***July 30, 2003 (2300)***)

NORTHERN ROCKIES DAILY SUMMARY
Northern Rockies Preparedness Level = 5
National Preparedness Level = 5

Light initial attack – 15 new fires for 5,044 acres

- ***Flathead Area Command (Mann) is managing the large fires on the Flathead National Forest, Glacier National Park and the Kootenai National Forest.***
 - ***Wedge Canyon – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Bennett), 21,374 acres, 25% contained, 20 miles E of Eureka, Montana.***
 - ***Robert – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Stam), 14,500 acres, 5% contained, 8 miles N of Columbia Falls, Montana.***
 - ***Trapper Creek Complex – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Raley). Complex is 18,600 acres, 35% contained. This Complex is made up of the Trapper Creek (15,000 acres – 25% contained), Paul Bunyan (300 acres – 100% contained) and Wolf Gun (3,300 acres – 35% contained) fires located 45 statute miles NE of Kalispell, MT.***
 - ***Ross Creek – Type 2 Incident Management Team (Sandman), 195 acres, 70% contained, 20 air miles SW of Troy, Montana. Containment expected 8/2/03.***
 - ***Little Salmon Creek Complex – This 1,800 acre Wildland Fire Use complex is located 47 miles SE of Kalispell, Montana in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. This complex, made up***

of the Pagoda (120 acres) and the Little Salmon (1,680 acres), is being managed to accomplish resource objectives.

- *Black Frog Complex - Type 1 Incident Management Team (Frye), 35% contained. This Complex is made up of the Blackwall fire (4,442 acres), located 32 miles N of Salmon, Idaho and Frog Pond (2,091 acres), as well as numerous concentrations of spots on both fires for a total of 7,500 acres located 34 miles S of Hamilton, Montana.*
- *Hidden Lake – Type 2 Incident Management Team (Chrisman), 3,500 acres, 75% contained, 30 miles W of Dillon, Montana. Containment expected 8/2/03.*
- *Big Creek - 1,339 acres, 80% contained, 4 miles NW of Victor, Montana.*

STATE FORECAST FOR MONTANA
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE GREAT FALLS MT
415 AM MDT THU JUL 31 2003

WEST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

Today - Mostly Sunny. Slight Chance Of Thunderstorms South. Highs 91 To 101.

Tonight - Mostly Clear. Slight Chance Of Thunderstorms South. Lows 48 To 58.

Friday - Mostly Sunny. Highs 91 To 101.

CENTRAL MONTANA

Today - Partly Cloudy. Isolated Showers And Thunderstorms. Highs In The Mid 80s To Mid 90s.

Tonight - Partly Cloudy. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms. Lows In The 50s.

Friday - Partly Cloudy. Highs In The Lower 80s To Mid 90s.

SOUTHWEST MONTANA

Today - Partly Cloudy. Isolated Showers And Thunderstorms. Highs In The Mid 70s To Lower 90s.

Tonight - Partly Cloudy In The Evening Then Clearing. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms. Lows In The Upper 40s To Mid 50s.

Friday - Mostly Sunny. Highs In The Mid 70s To Upper 80s.

EASTERN AND SOUTHERN MONTANA

Today - Partly Cloudy. A Slight Chance Of Thunderstorms This Afternoon. Highs In The Lower 80s To Lower 90s.

Tonight - Partly Cloudy. Lows In The 50s.

Friday - Mostly Clear North. Partly Cloudy South. Highs In The Mid 80s To Mid 90s.

III. - Summary of Actions being taken by Local Government Officials:

Local government resources from various jurisdictions have been actively engaged in fire fighting efforts, particularly during the past several days. The evacuation of residents whose properties have been threatened have been conducted as required.

<u>Local Emergency and Disaster Declarations</u>		<u>Date Filed</u>
Cascade County	Emergency Declaration (Box Canyon/Long Mtn.)	7/15/03
Garfield County	Disaster Declaration (Missouri Breaks)	7/15/03
Beaverhead County	Emergency Resolution (multiple fires)	7/17/03
Ravalli County	Emergency Declaration (Big Creek)	7/20/03
Flathead County	Emergency Declaration (Wedge Canyon)	7/21/03
Sanders County	Resolution (Level II Fire Restrictions)	7/29/03

IV. - Summary of State Activities and Resources Committed:

State Declaration:

On 7/18/03, Governor Judy Martz signed an Executive Order (# 14-03) in which she declared a statewide emergency thereby enabling mobilization of state resources (including the Montana National Guard) should they be needed to help protect the life, health and/or property of Montana's citizens.

FEMA Declarations:

FEMA Fire Management Assistance Declaration approved on July 23rd, 2003 for Missouri Breaks Complex fire.

FEMA Fire Management Assistance Declaration approved on July 25th, 2003 for Flathead County's Wedge Canyon and Roberts fires.

Requests for State Assistance:

- The Montana National Guard is assisting "initial attack" fire suppression operations by supplying 3 UH-60 (Blackhawk) Helicopters modules and approximately 35 people. One helicopter is currently assigned to the Flathead Interagency Dispatch Center, another is assigned to the Helena Interagency Dispatch Center, and the third is assigned to Missoula. The Montana National Guard Personnel Resources currently allocated to wild land fire suppression duties stands at 35.

- One NG Liaison Officer has been assigned to the Northern Rockies Coordination Center (NGCC) in Missoula.

· MT Highway Patrol and MT Department of Transportation are supporting fire efforts with local jurisdictions and fire management to limit travel disturbances.

Status of State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)

- Montana DES is providing support to local governments through the State Emergency Coordination Center in Helena. ***The SECC is currently operating at Activation Level III. Level III operations include a full staff 0800-1700 during weekdays with a duty officer on call after hours . Weekend operations will be staffed at Level II from 0800-1700 unless it becomes necessary to advance to a higher activation level.***
- The State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC) will continue to monitor conditions and is prepared to provide 24-hour incident support to local governments. After office hours (i.e., 1700-0700) support is available through the DES Duty Officer who may be reached at (406) 841-3911.

Addendums to Situation Report

As of: **July 31th, 2003**

Road Closures: Information is current as of 07/30/03

Southwest

Montana Highway 43 and U.S. 93, closed recently because of the Black Frog fire complex, but reopened at noon on Friday, July 25. The roads are now open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., daily for the foreseeable future, officials said. The River Road will be open with pilot cars on the hour, from Lost Trail Pass to Gibbonsville, Idaho. This section of Highway 93 is closed at night, from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. Forest Service officials have closed the Gibbonsville Road from where it enters the Salmon-Challis National Forest to where it leaves the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Highway 43 is now open 24 hours a day from Lost Trail Pass to Wisdom. The Salmon River Road has now been cleared to allow one lane passage. The Panther Creek Road is impassable near Panther Creek's confluence with the Salmon River due to landslides.

Northwest

The Wedge Canyon fire, 6-miles south of the Canadian boarder, and the Robert fire, between Coram and West Glacier, are actively requiring the continued closure of Secondary 486 to all but essential traffic. ***The*** Going-to-the-Sun Road is closed from West Glacier to Logan Pass, due to fires. Logan Pass remains open, but the only access is from the east side of the park. Highway 2 on the south boundary of Glacier provides access to the east side of the park. The Inside North Fork Road (north and south of Polebridge) is open from Fish Creek to Big Prairie, just north of Polebridge, but is closed from Big Prairie north.

Reported Major Fire Activity:

Report Date: Jul 30, 2003 1800 hrs

Black Frog Complex:

***Residences threatened: 75
Estimated Cost: \$5,800,000***

***Commercial Property: 1
% contained: 35%***

Outbuildings/Other: 10

Robert Fire:

***Residences threatened: 200
Estimated Cost: \$3,600,000***

***Commercial Property: 24
% contained: 5%***

Outbuildings/Other: 36

Wedge Canyon:

***Residences threatened: 100
Estimated Cost: \$7,300,000***

***Commercial Property: 6
% contained: 25 %***

Outbuildings/Other: 23

Trapper Creek Complex:

Residences threatened: *Commercial Property:* 3 *Outbuildings/Other:* 4
Estimated Cost: 504,000 % contained: 35 %

Ross Creek:

Residences threatened: 0 *Commercial Property:* 0 *Outbuildings/Other:* 0
Estimated Cost: \$1,623,000 % contained: 70%

Little Salmon Complex

Residences threatened: 1 *Commercial Property:* 0 *Outbuildings/Other:* 1
Estimated Cost: \$21,000 % contained: NR%

Hidden Lake:

Residences threatened: 0 *Commercial Property:* 0 *Outbuildings/Other:* 0
Estimated Cost: \$2,200,000 % contained: 75%

Big Creek:

Residences threatened: 0 *Commercial Property:* 0 *Outbuildings/Other:* 0
Estimated Cost: \$3,887,000 % contained: 80%

Current DES Situation Report From Flathead Area Command:

Wildfires in Glacier have caused the need for the evacuation of west Glacier and Apgar. There are approximately 250 homes in the area. The local Red Cross chapter has established a shelter in White Fish at the North Valley Hospital Basement.

Fire Restrictions and Closures

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Restrictions</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>
Northwestern Zone	Stage II Restrictions	July 28, 2003
Southwestern Zone	Stage II Restrictions	July 28, 2003
Central Montana Zone	Stage II Restrictions	July 28, 2003
South Central Zone	Stage II Restrictions	July 28, 2003
Eastern Montana Zone		
	<u>Stage I Restrictions</u> (Billings)	July 18, 2003
	<u>Stage II Restrictions</u>	
	State & Private: Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass counties	July 25, 2003
	Federal: Treasure, Musselshell, Bighorn, Yellowstone	July 18, 2003
	<u>Stage I Restrictions</u> (Lewistown)	July 21, 2003
	<u>Stage II Restrictions</u>	
	State & Private: Liberty County	
	Federal: Chouteau, Fergus, Judith Basin, Wheatland	July 25, 2003
	<u>Stage I Restrictions</u> (Miles City)	July 26, 2003

General Fire Information and Severity to Date

- Plum Creek has closed all private and public use on their holdings, logging operations are also shut down
- Beaverhead and Deerlodge National Forest have currently Plume Dominated Fire Conditions and are expected to continue for the next few days

- Energy Release Component
Lincoln Ranger District reports component same as 1988 when the Canyon Creek Fire started
Helena reports component is 14 points higher than when the Cave Gulch Fire started in 2000
- NW Area command
Burnout initiated by fire mgt on the Roberts and Wedge Canyon have proven successful to date
- General Cost for fires under Northern Rockies Coordination and acreage total [from Northern Rockies Priorities List -acreage estimate on active fires]
- Cost: \$25 million Acreage: 67241
- ***Many campgrounds and areas of Glacier National Park remain closed. Many Glacier, St. Mary, and Goat Haunt areas of the park remain open. Also the backcountry in the Belly River area of the park is still accessible. For more information on Glacier consult:***
<http://www.nps.gov/glac/whatsnew/recupd.htm>

Web Links:

Glacier National Park Fire Management:

<http://www.nps.gov/glac/resources/fires.htm>

Northern Rockies Interagency Information Center

<http://fs.fed.us/r1/fire/2003fires/index.htm>